



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR

CHIYOME L. FUKINO M.D., DIRECTOR
Phone: (808) 586-4410
Fax: (808) 586-4444

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WEST NILE VIRUS BATTLE HEATS UP

HONOLULU – As mosquito season heats up on the mainland the Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) is asking for the public's help to prevent the potentially fatal disease, West Nile Virus (WNV), from spreading to Hawaii. Officials want residents to eliminate standing water - where mosquitoes can breed - around their property.

“Even if West Nile virus comes to Hawaii, our hope is that without mosquitoes to transmit the disease it will not become established,” said Greg Olmsted, Vector Control Branch, Hawaii State Department of Health. “Getting rid of mosquito breeding areas just takes a little bit of effort and it has the huge benefit of protecting Hawaii’s delicate ecosystem and human health.”

Eliminate standing water where mosquitoes can breed:

- Tip over pots, wheelbarrows and containers
- Hose bromeliads and other plants that collect water weekly or add dish soap or commercial larvicide
- Fix leaky faucets that create puddles
- Get rid of rubbish such as old tires

Oahu residents can dispose of bulky items that could hold water and breed mosquitoes by calling the City and County of Honolulu Refuse Division at 523-4685 to arrange for curbside pickup.

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Hawaii residents can also help WNV surveillance efforts by reporting and turning in dead birds for testing. Birds are susceptible to the disease so dead birds in an area may be the first indication the virus is here. To find the nearest designated collection site call 2-1-1 or visit www.hawaii.gov/health.

West Nile Virus is a sometimes-fatal disease that is spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. It can infect people, horses, many types of birds, and some other animals. WNV is not transmitted from person to person or from birds to people.

Most people who become infected with West Nile Virus will have either no symptoms or only mild sickness characterized by flu-like symptoms. However, on rare occasion, West Nile Virus infection can result in severe and sometimes fatal illnesses.

To reduce the risk of being bitten by mosquitoes DOH recommends the following protective measures:

- Keep areas around your property free of standing water where mosquitoes can breed.
- Avoid activities in areas where mosquitoes are plentiful.
- Keep mosquitoes from entering your home by repairing screens in windows and doors.
- Wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts when possible.
- Use insect repellent that contains DEET (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide)

Eliminating mosquito-breeding areas will also help guard against other mosquito borne diseases such as Dengue Fever.

Since WNV first came to the United States in 1999 almost 17,000 cases have been confirmed and more than 650 people have died from the disease.

For more information visit the Department of Health web site at www.hawaii.gov/health or consult the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) site at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm

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For More Information Contact:

Laura M. Lott
Department of Health
Information Specialist
Phone: (808) 586-4418
Email: lmlott@mail.health.state.hi.us

Shokufeh Ramirez
Department of Health
West Nile Virus Coordinator
Phone: (808) 587-6596
Email: smramire@doh.hawaii.gov